



# EXPRESS LANES PROJECT

The N.C. Department of Transportation is moving forward with a project to improve 26 miles of the I-77 corridor from Uptown Charlotte to the Lake Norman area. NCDOT has signed a contract with Cintra to construct this project through a joint venture with F.A. Southeast, W.C. English, and the lead design firm of The Louis Berger Group.

The Public-Private Partnership (P3) leverages new funding sources to lessen the financial impact to the state and completes projects faster through investments by a private firm. Cintra will invest the majority of the \$655 million to design, build, operate and maintain the express lanes project in exchange for toll revenue generated from the lanes. NCDOT will invest \$88 million toward the project, which is significantly less than the \$170 million it had projected.

This funding solution enables the project to be completed by 2018, instead of relying on traditional funds to make piecemeal improvements over the next 20 years.

The I-77 express lanes project proposes to add capacity to the corridor between I-277 (Exit 11) in Charlotte and N.C. 150 (Exit 36) in Iredell County in three sections:

- **Southern Section:** Extending from I-277 near Tryon Street to I-77 North for approximately two miles, and along I-277 from I-77 North to Brevard Street. A flyover bridge will provide direct access between I-77 and I-277. Current HOV lanes will be converted to express lanes, and a second express lane will be constructed, totaling two express lanes in each direction.
- **Central Section:** Extending from I-85 (Exit 13) to Catawba Avenue (Exit 28) in Cornelius. This includes converting the existing HOV lanes to express lanes, providing two express lanes in each direction.
- **Northern Section:** Continuing from Exit 28 approximately nine miles to N.C. 150 (Exit 36) in Iredell County. One express lane will be built in each direction.

The project is bonded to ensure completion, and the debt is backed by toll revenues. Should the company default on the contract for any reason, the state will get the project for 50–60 cents on the dollar along with all future toll revenues. If revenues fall significantly short of project estimates, the state could contribute up to \$75 million over the 50-year contract term. Even if the entire \$75 million is used, the projected public contribution is less than the \$170 million initial public contribution previously anticipated.

## Express Lanes

This project offers drivers an option—continue using the existing general purpose lanes for free, or pay a toll to enter and exit the express lanes at various points for better travel time reliability. Motorists using the express lanes will reduce congestion for those choosing to stay in the general purpose lanes.

Vehicles with three or more occupants can use the express lanes for free, as can motorcycles, buses and emergency vehicles. Toll prices will vary, based on time of day and traffic volumes.

## Commitment to Due Diligence

NCDOT has strived to engage the community, and state and local leaders over the past two years to ensure this project is the most effective long-term solution to an immediate need in this critical corridor in the following ways. The department has held more than a dozen public hearings, meetings and workshops for citizens, and met with key stakeholders more than 40 times.

## Contact

**Rodger Rochelle, PE**

Administrator of Technical Services Division  
(919) 707-2900

[rdrochelle@ncdot.gov](mailto:rdrochelle@ncdot.gov)

**Louis Mitchell, PE**

Division 10 Engineer  
(704) 983-4400

[lmitchell@ncdot.gov](mailto:lmitchell@ncdot.gov)

## Next Steps

**Late Nov. / Early Dec. 2014:** Anticipated financial close

**Nov. 2014–June 2016:** Final design

**Jan. 2015–June 2016:** Right-of-way acquisition

**July 2015–Late 2018:** Construction phase

## Project Benefits

- Provides travel time reliability on the express lanes
- Gives drivers a choice
- Improves travel time on the general purpose lanes
- Completes project sooner

## I-77 Express Lanes

